

**Maine Maritime Museum Library**

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**Inventory for  
Manuscript Collection  
MS-96**

***Bessie H. Rose (Three-mast schooner)  
Records***

**Inclusive dates: 1883-1892**

**Bulk dates: 1891-1892**

by  
Tracy Lamaestra  
June 2012

Shelf feet: .25 linear feet

Number of boxes: 1

*Accession 91.98*

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## Abstract

### ***Bessie H. Rose (Three-mast schooner)***

Records, 1883-1892 (Bulk dates: 1891-1892)

1 box, (.25 Shelf feet)

Three-mast schooner built in Wiscasset, Maine in 1883 by John Barker. Wrecked on the banks of Bimini Island, Bahamas, 1892.

Includes certificate of classification, account summary, general accounts, articles of agreement, crew wages accounts, crew lists and protests.

Donated by A. Donald King on October 28, 1991.

MS-96, Accession No. 91.98.

Related material available at repository, MS-53.

Finding aid available in repository; folder-level control.

#### **Added entries—persons:**

Sawyer Wellington O., *Captain*

#### **Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels)**

*Bessie H. Rose* (Three-mast schooner)

#### **Added entries—places:**

Bimini (BAH)

#### **Added entries—key terms:**

Accounts

Certificates

Crew lists

Invoices

Marine protests

Merchant seamen

Seamanship

Ship Captains

Wages

Wreck

## **Acquisition**

The schooner *Bessie H. Rose* records were donated to the Maine Maritime Museum on October 28, 1991 by A. Donald King, accession no. 91.98.

## **Provenance**

There is no documentation on where the donor acquired the schooner *Bessie H. Rose* records.

## **Restrictions**

There are no restrictions on the study or use of these materials.

## **Physical Condition**

The majority of records are in good physical condition. Some manuscripts are discolored and stained. Others have folds, creases, tears or dog ears. Those with heavier crease lines were flattened with a tacking iron at low to medium heat. Torn papers were repaired with thin, transparent document repair tape. Articles of agreements are adhered atop the crew lists. These papers were left attached to prevent further damage as attempts to detach them were futile. Pins and fasteners were removed from papers. Fragile documents were sleeved.

## **Processing Notes**

The records already had some semblance of order, so organizing the collection was not difficult. The arrangement of these vessel records follows a standardized sequence to simplify access. Material is organized chronologically within each folder.

## **Historical Notes**

*Bessie H. Rose* (Three-mast schooner) was built in Wiscasset, Maine in 1883 by John Barker. The vessel was owned by J. Manchester Haynes of Augusta, Maine. The *Bessie H. Rose* hailed from the port of Bath. Captain John A. Adams was shipmaster of the vessel from 1883 to 1889. Captain Wellington O. Sawyer was shipmaster from 1890 until the vessel wrecked in January 1892 on the banks of Bimini Island, Bahamas when he was master.

Captain Wellington O. Sawyer with a crew of nine men and a cargo of phosphate rock was bound from Navassa Island for Baltimore, Maryland on the *Bessie H. Rose* (Three-mast schooner) when suddenly caught up in heavy gales in December 1891. Cargo was thrown overboard in attempt to lighten the vessel. The crew continued to struggle with gales and heavy intake of water. Eventually, the vessel wrecked broadside into the banks of Bimini Island and was stranded in January 1892. All cargo was lost from the schooner. The vessel was declared a

total loss on January 18, 1892. The captain and entire crew were saved. Captain William S. Weech of the *Charles Tunnell* (Schooner) was allowed to strip the vessel for parts at the wreckage location.

### Biographical Notes

**Captain Wellington O. Sawyer:** Captain Wellington O. Sawyer was born in 1856 to Oliver and Mary M. (Norton) Sawyer at Jonesport, Maine. He married Laura Anna Watts (b. 1854) on July 30, 1877. They had children Ernistine (b. 1878) and Mary O. (b. 1880). He married Carrie C. Messervy (b. abt. 1865) on January 25, 1894 in Boston, Massachusetts. They had no children.

Captain Sawyer commanded the *Bessie H. Rose* (Three-mast schooner), *James B. Drake* (Four-mast schooner) and *Speedwell* (Three-mast schooner). His brother Captain William Arthur Sawyer (b. 1864) of Addison, Maine was master of the schooner *James B. Drake* as well. Captain Sawyer spent most of his life at sea. He resided in Jonesport, Maine as a sea captain. He was also a shipping agent in Boston in 1900. He lived in Everett, Massachusetts from 1902 to 1908 where he was a master mariner. Captain Sawyer relocated to Boise, Idaho with wife Carrie where he was a retail grocer in 1910. He died in Jonesport, Maine on unknown date.

### References cited:

1. <http://roostweb.ancestry.com>. On-line source. 7 June 2012.
2. <http://search.ancestry.com>. On-line source. 6 June 2012.
3. "Ship Registers and Enrollments of Machias, Maine 1780-1930." Part II. National Archives Project, Maine Division of Community Service Programs, Works Projects Administration, 1942.
4. "The Schooner James B. Drake Launched Today." Bath Daily Times. 18 January, 1904.

### Scope and Content Notes

The *Bessie H. Rose* (Three-mast schooner) records are vessel documents for the schooner *Bessie H. Rose*. The majority of the papers date 1891 to 1892. Collection contents include a certificate of classification, account summaries of Captain Wellington O. Sawyer as shipmaster, accounts general, articles of agreement (includes crew wages), crew lists and protests.

A formal investigation was conducted by Thomas T. Jones, Resident Justice, of the *Bessie H. Rose* (Three-mast schooner) shipwreck at Bimini, Bahamas in January 1892. Mr. Jones interviewed Captain Wellington O. Sawyer the shipmaster of the schooner *Bessie H. Rose* about the collision. Jones also recorded the statements of James G. Bryant (First Mate) and Charles A. Johnson (Able Seaman) concerning the wreck. Furthermore, Captain John A. Saunders and Edward J. Wilkinson (Master Mariner) observed the incident from aboard the *Eva* (Schooner). They also attempted to save the *Bessie H. Rose* (Three-mast schooner) by assisting the crew. Jones documents both their accounts in his report. Furthermore, Captain William Weech of the *Charles Tunnell* (Schooner) was interviewed by Jones as he assisted the crew and then was allowed to strip the vessel for parts at the wreckage location.

Protest accounts record the net sales from the auction of the wreckage, plus the passage for Captain Sawyer from Nassau back to New York. There is also a board bill for Captain Sawyer's stay at the Royal Victoria Hotel in Nassau prior to his departure home. The articles of

agreement list the crewmen payoffs after the wreck on January 26, 1893 (folder 4). Accompanying the articles of agreement are individual receipts for these particular crewmen and payoffs (folder 4).

**MS-96 Three-mast schooner *Bessie H. Rose* Records  
Container List**

**Vessel Papers (n.d., 1883, 1891-1892)**

**Box# Folder#**

1	1	Certificate of classification, 1883
2		Accounts, summary, Capt. Wellington. O. Sawyer, 1891-1892
3		General, Boston, 1891
4		Articles of Agreement, 1891-1892 (includes crew wages)
5		Crew lists, n.d. 1892
6		Protests, Bimini Island (Bahamas), wreckage, Jan. 1892
7		Account, n.d., 1892
8		Miscellaneous, envelope, n.d.